DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 176 002 CE 017 881

AUTHOR Willis, Margaret L.
TITLE The Organization of Household Work and Role Problems for Employed Women and Men.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 36p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; Comparative Analysis; *Family Relationship; Females; Males; Personal Adjustment; *Role Conflict; Role Perception; Sex Differences; *Sex Role; Work Attitudes; *Working Women
IDENTIFIERS *Housework

ABSTRACT

A study examined the relationship between household work and those role problems which employed women experience to a greater extent than employed men. The research was based on an analytical model of the relationships between (1) three independent variables (personal attitudes, household work, and others' attitudes toward the individual's job) and (2) those role problems experienced to a greater extent by career women than by career men (career problems, family relationships, and personal adjustment). To test the model a statewide survey (Washington) was administered in the Department of Social and Health Services to 446 males and females at mid-administrative levels and above, matched by division and job title. Based on 80% response, about 30% of all role problems (less than expected) were found to be experienced to a greater degree by career women than career men. Household work was the only independent variable to be linked to the greater role problems experienced by women than by men. The areas where the participation in household work was an intermediate link between female sex and greater role problems were these: spouse job location as a problems for own career, traditional female domestic task inadequacy, and personal role problems. Greater problems in each area is one consequence of spending more time on household work. (Results of the multiple regression tests and suggestions for subsequent research are included.) (JT)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

CE

ED176002

# THE ORGANIZATION OF HOUSEHOLD WORK AND ROLE PROBLEMS FOR EMPLOYED WOMEN AND MEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Peggy Willis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Margaret L. Willis
Family Policy Study Group
Pacific Lutheran University

CE 012881

DO NOT RUN THIS PAGE

Recently there has been increasing interest in the organization of household work and its relationship to family, work and personal role problems (Blood, 1960; Nye and Hoffman, 1963; Pleck, 1975). Changes in the family suggest that there are "new" flexible roles emerging and that for many, the traditional male and female family roles no longer hold. There are fewer male breadwinner only families today than ever before, only 7% of all families now are reported to be of this type.[1] With the increasing occupational participation by women, wives and mothers, has come the questioning of the organization of household work. Increasingly, feminists too, have challenged the unequal division of work in the home.

In this paper we examine the relationship between household work and those role problems which employed women experience to a greater extent than employed men. These findings are from a larger study of work and family problems of career women and men.

We consider questions such as 1. What are the role problems which employed women experience to a greater extent than employed men; 2. What aspects of household work are linked to the problems which the women experience to a greater extent than the men; 3. To what extent are variables other than organization of household work linked with these role problems; 4. To what extent can a combination of all relevant variables* reduce the direct link between female sex and the problems experienced to a greater extent by the employed women than the employed men to a statistically non-significant level.

Studies of household work have not been a major focus for sociological research. Recently, there has been growing concern about the consequences of the organization of household work especially for women employed outside the home. This study investigates the consequences of women's greater participation in household work for those role problems which are experienced to a greater extent by the women than by the men. The study is based on employed men and

*Those independent variables and control variables which have a statistically significant zero order relationship with both sex of respondent and a particular role problem.

women who hold mid-level administrative positions and above. We attempt to show that problems experienced to a greater extent by the working women than the working men are linked to the amount of household work they perform. The dependent variables were chosen to identify those problems encountered by career women as a consequence of their employment.

## Conceptual Scheme for Dependent Variables

One source of role problems is in role strain. Turner identified three sources of role strain as (1) the inability to perform a role adequately, (2) the failure of reciprocation from others, and (3) failure of role performance to produce a sense of worth (Turner, 1970). Turner found

> Inability or fear of inability to perform a role adequately is the simplest source of strain. It occurs under either of two main conditions. (a) Inappropriate role allocation, when roles are ascribed or the individual is prevented from changing roles because of commitment, means that the aptitudes of the individual do not suit the role. Whenever, as with sex roles, a relatively uniform role is ascribed arbitrarily to a set of people with highly varied potentialities, there is some role strain. And the intensity and frequency of the strain is greater when the role is least variant and most imperative. (b) Role demands that are excessive or inconsistent likewise ensure inadequate performance and resulting strain.[2]

Traditional norms in terms of sex roles and family persist alongside an egalitarian ideology which simultaneously says women are equal to men. Data by Turner (1964), Perrucci (1970), and Epstein (1971) indicate that career women do in fact subscribe to the same career goals, interests, and aspirations as do working men. However, even with egalitarian ideology and similar career goals, women retain traditional sex-defined attitudes and responsibilities in the family leading to potential role strain; thus problems result. The ascribed role allocation leading to an excessive role demand condition is one potential reason why career women might be seen as experiencing greater role problems than career men. Furthermore, career women may experience failure of reciprocation from others in the family and at work. Turner describes this situation as ". . . one of disorganization--failure of the interactive aspect of a role system."[3]

A third reason to expect greater role problems for career women than career men is due to the failure of the role to produce a sense of self-worth

and accomplishment. According to Turner, the key to this source of role problems lies in the degree to which there are no mutually reinforcing roles available to the individual which are in turn geared to a mutually supportive system of values. It is precisely because role problems represent imbalances in the satisfactions of working women that we are concerned with these problems. Sex differences in role problems point to a breakdown in the means for achieving success goals, according to Merton (1938). This is viewed by Turner (1970) as a situation where either mutually reinforcing roles are lacking for the individual and/or a mutually supportive system of values is lacking for them.

Based on the above, this study will look at those role problems experienced to a greater extent by career women (compared with career men). Following Wilensky (1961), the use of the word "career" will refer to an occupational position requiring special preparation, such as formal training, and regular advancement in the chosen field.

## Summary of Literature on Independent Variables

Among the various factors which may facilitate or hinder the enactment of family and work roles for women, the largest group includes the amount of time required for fulfillment of the housewife and mother roles. Working women still spend considerable time at these tasks. Research with 1,378 families in New York showed that the housewife's daily time varied from a low of 3.5 hours a day when she was young, employed, and had no children to a high of 12 hours a day when she was not employed and had seven or more children, one still a baby (Walker, 1973). Husband's household work averaged 1.5 hours a day and did not vary greatly by work status of wife or presence of small children. Detailed studies concluded that women are adding an additional role (to time in household tasks) when they work (Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971). This appears to be the case even for women in prestigious positions (Epstein, 1971; Astin, 1969; Epstein, 1970).

The extent to which the husband helps with household and child-care tasks is important in assisting the wife to combine work and family roles satisfactorily. Hoffman indicated that the husband was also a resource to be called upon in emergencies (Hoffman, 1975).

Our study is concerned with the consequences of greater participation in household work. Research has not conclusively demonstrated that the homemaker and parent role increases role problems for working women. In support of this hypothesis is Harmon's study which suggested that marriage was an impediment to female sociologists (Harmon, 1968). Bernard (1964) discovered that academic women were less likely to be married, and had smaller families. Astin (1969) found that the number of female Ph.D.s who were childless was double that of married women on the average. These studies indirectly support a contention that marriage and family are problematic for these women.

Other researches indicated a glaring inability to document a negative impact of household work on role performances of career women. Paloma and Garland (1971) noted that women in the professions were unwilling to admit they had experienced discrimination and that they were treated unequally, even though the data continued to mount. The authors suggested that it was the family that stood in the way of the women's career advancement and caused discrimination. They noted that few writers had been willing to denote family roles as a barrier to equality for women (for an exception, see Mitchell, 1966). Also, Rossi states,

> Since women have had, and probably will continue to have, primary responsibility for child-rearing, their participation in politics, professions or the arts cannot be equal to that of men unless ways are devised to ease the combination of home and work responsibilities.[4]

Since, "Fewer women today choose a career over marriage, the result has been a reduction in women's representation in the more challenging and demanding occupations."[5] In sum, more equal participation in household work has been found correlated with greater marital satisfaction (Powell, 1963), negatively correlated with marital satisfaction if fifty percent or more tasks were shared (Blood and Wolfe, 1960), and uncorrelated with marital and work role problems (Paloma and Garland, 1971). There are no conclusive findings as to the impact of greater participation in household work on marital role problems.

There is also very little information on whether greater participation in household work by women is related to greater career problems for them. The participation in the wife and mother role has been reported associated with greater career impediments (Harmon, 1968), and the female sex status

has been linked to both lower productivity (Caplow & McGee, 1965; Feldman, 1973) and higher productivity (Epstein, 1970). Paloma and Garland (1971) indicated that they believed unequal participation in household work was the major impediment to career advancement for married women, but they found no variation in role satisfaction in their sample by division of household work.

Women probably also experience more negative attitudes toward their work roles from others. The negative attitudes of the community probably act to increase role problems for these women. The direct relationship between female sex and greater role problems may operate partially through these negative attitudes of others. Data discussed previously tended to support the proposition that husband's attitudes toward wife working was perhaps the most important factor in satisfactory marriage relationships (Blood, 1963; Bailyn, 1971). Also, positive support of peers and community were found to be important in attaining and maintaining high career role satisfactions (Epstein, 1970).

A third set of factors are the personal attitudes of males and females. These have been found to influence work entry (Hoffman, 1975), career rewards (Turner, 1964), career choice (White, 1971), and work-family role success (Myrdal and Klein, 1956; Bailyn, 1971; Blood, 1963). However, other data indicated no sex differences in personal attitudes toward occupation in persons trained for the same occupation (Perrucci, 1970). Positive personal attitudes of women workers toward their work roles were linked to their greater family satisfaction by Safilios-Rothschild (1970), to both greater career and marital satisfaction by Ridley (1973), and to fewer problems in work and personal roles by Watley (1971). However, these data were not based on a male comparison group.

## Hypotheses

This study focuses on four hypotheses concerning sex differences in role problems and predicts that female sex status has no direct relationship to greater role problems but rather, operates indirectly through the relevant independent and control variables. By preliminary analysis we first select those role problems which career women experience to a greater extent than career men.

Controlling for all relevant variables* we expect that:

1. Female sex status has an indirect relationship with greater role problems by way of greater participation in household work,** which is itself directly associated with greater role problems.

By preliminary analysis, we established sex differences in household work for females for the following variables: greater weekly housework hours, greater proportion of total weekly hours housework, and greater percent of traditional female household tasks.

We also test to see whether:

2. Female sex status has an indirect relationship with greater role problems by way of adoption of certain personal attitudes, which is itself directly associated with greater role problems.

By preliminary analysis, we established sex differences in the personal attitudes of females for the following variables: lower ranking of success and creativity as (instrumental) career goals, higher ranking of developing the whole person and meeting people as (expressive) career goals, more positive attitude toward their own sex, and more positive attitude toward women combining work and family roles.

3. Female sex status has an indirect relationship with greater role problems by way of negative attitudes of others toward the individual's career, which are themselves directly associated with greater role problems.

By preliminary analysis, we established sex differences for the female respondents in attitudes of others toward the individual's career in the following variables: a more negative attitude of female social contacts toward women's equal participation in employment; a greater proportion of the social contacts are female; a more positive influence of peers, parents, and teachers on career goals; and a more negative influence of spouse and societal expectations on career goals.

4. Female sex status has no direct relationship with greater role problems after controlling for all relevant variables.

*Controlling for all relevant variables means controlling for all sex-linked independent and control variables which have significant zero-order correlations with those role problems which are experienced significantly greater by females than by males.

**Hoffman refers to the wife and mother role. Our study will use the gender neutral term household work.

## Analytical Model

The model we are to test consists of an examination of intervening variables which, when controlled, make the original correlation between female sex (X) and role problems (Y) disappear. This model attempts to find the intermediate links between female sex status and greater role problems for women (compared with men). It thereby converts what was originally conceived to be a direct relationship between sex and role problems into an indirect one.

The model to be discussed is assumed to have additive influences. We are ruling out two-way causation, thus simplifying the model to a recursive system. Variables are chosen which have high zero-order correlations with each role problem and with sex status, and are not highly correlated with other variables.

If relevant variables which might account for the observed sex differences in some outcome are not included in the analysis, then the unexplained differences between male and female groups could either overestimate or underestimate the actual relationship between sex and role problems.

The relationship between sex and role problems will be overestimated to the extent there is measurement error in the control variables, independent variables, or the dependent variable. Since measurement error attenuates the proportion of variance explained, it inflates the magnitude of the unexplained variance. This implies that personal attitudes, household work variables, and others' attitudes sanctioning employment for women will be less likely to explain the sex differences in role problems to the extent that there is measurement error in these variables. Also, we will be less likely to interpret all the sex differences in outcomes using the controls and independent variables. The proposed analysis is worthwhile in that it constitutes a first step in decomposing sex differences in role problems which females experience to a greater extent than males, into those explained by differences between the sexes in background characteristics, those explained by independent variables, and those apparently attributable entirely to sex. Furthermore, it allows us to indicate the extent to which personal

attitudes, household work, and/or negative attitudes of others are important in decomposing sex differences in role problems which are greater for females than males.

The criteria for testing the analytical model were the following:

1. A theoretical justification for the inclusion of the independent variables.

2. The independent variables and control variables must have been shown to be significantly related to the dependent variables and to sex status through zero-order correlations for the female sex.

3. Regression coefficients for all the paths in the model should be statistically significant.

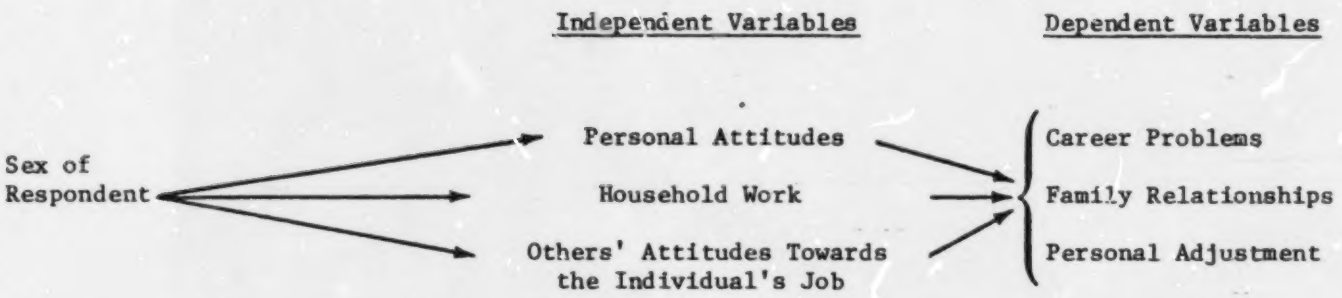



Figure 1. Analytical Model of the Relationships Between Independent Variables and Those Role Problems Experienced to a Greater Extent by Career Women than Career Men

## Sample

To test the model, a statewide survey was administered in the Department of Social and Health Services to 446 males and females at mid-administrative levels and above, matched by Division and job title. The males were selected to match the female job titles. Three follow ups resulted in an 80% response.

## Operational Definitions

### Measures of Household Work

Division of Tasks. In this study the division of household work was first measured by a seven-item index of traditional female household tasks. Respondents were asked, "Who usually does each of these tasks in your household?" Response categories are self, spouse, both equally, domestic help, or no one. The seven items were selected from those used by Blood and Wolfe (1960) and Bailyn (1971) to reflect basic female domestic tasks of housework, child care, cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing, and health care during illness of children. Addition of the "domestic help" and "no one" categories was viewed as an improvement over the Blood and Wolfe categories and it allows for a varying number of tasks over the life cycle.

An average was computed from the total number of tasks performed and the total amount of such tasks performed by the respondent. The score is the percentage of total tasks performed by the respondent.

Time. The second aspect of household work considered was the amount of time spent on specific activities. Respondents were asked to indicate how they spend their time on an ordinary week day. Responses were marked for each hour of the day in terms of four categories: work and occupational activities, family relationships, household tasks, and leisure and relaxation.

List 1. Variables Related to Sex through Zero-Order Correlations

Independent Variables

Personal Attitudes
- Work Importance (1-4, 4 = Lo importance)
- Creative Career Goal (1-8, 8 = Lo rank)
- Success Career Goal (1-8, 8 = Lo rank)
- Whole Person Career Goal (1-8, 8 = Lo rank)
- Negative Attitude Toward Same Sex (1-4, 4 = neg. att.)
- Personal Disapproval Women Working (1-5, 5 = neg. att.)

Others' Attitudes Toward Individual's Employment
- Female Contacts' Attitude Toward Women Working (1-3, 3 = neg.)
- Peers' Influence on Career Goals (1-5, 5 = neg.)
- Spouse Influence on Career Goals (1-5, 5 = neg.)
- Teachers' Influence on Career Goals (1-5, 5 = neg.)
- Social Expectations Influence on Career Goals (1-5, 5 = neg.)
- Sex of Social Contacts (1-3, 3 = females)

Household Work
- Weekly Housework Hours
- Daily Family Hours
- Daily Household Hours
- Percent Traditional Female Tasks by Respondent
- Daily Work Hours

Control Variables

- Spouse Occupational Prestige (1-7, 7 = Lo)
- Income
- Spouse Income
- Marital Status (1-5, 5 = separated)
- Number of Children
- Stage of Family Life Cycle
- Age
- Religion (1-5, 5 = none)
- Job Status (1-3, 3 = Lo)
- Sex of Immediate Supervisor (1-2, 2 = female)
- Number of Males Supervised
- Work Status of Spouse (1-3, 3 = nonemployed)
- Race (1-4, 4 = other)
- Time in Occupation (1-6, 6 = longer)

Dependent Variables

- Not Hindered by Spouse Job Location
- No Problem with Part-Time Employment
- No System Sex Role Problems
- No Personal Role Problems
- No Problem Obtaining Household Help
- Traditional Female Domestic Task Inadequacy Problems
- Lack of Cohesion
- Personal Power

Measures of Others' Attitudes Toward the Individual's Employment

There were six indicators of attitudinal facilitators toward the individual's employment. Attitudes of family, community, and other groups can facilitate role satisfaction for men and women. The present conceptualization emphasizes factors affecting career goals, sex of social contacts, and social contacts' attitudes toward women working.

Measures of Personal Attitudes

Personal attitudes of working women have been discussed in terms of conscious and unconscious needs and attitudes toward the women's role, work motivation, dominance, and sense of competence. Money, attitude toward social roles, and personality are three general categories for conceptualizing work motivators, according to Hoffman (1975). Personal attitudes were measured in this study using six indicators of career goals, importance of occupation, attitude toward women working, and feelings about members of the same sex. See list 1, page 11 for response categories.

Measures of Career Problems

This study deals with 2 career problems indicators found by preliminary analysis to be greater for women than for men. Career problems have been dealt with in the literature as work dissatisfaction by Ridley (1973), as perceived lack of formal rights by Simon, Clark, and Galway (1967), as major problems by Watley (1971) and as inequalities by Miller, Labowitz, and Fry (1975). Career problems of working women have also been studied in terms of training, entry, salary, promotion, and productivity. Substantial documentation exists concerning the problems women face in these areas.

This study found career problems that were greater for the women than the men in terms of reported indications of "problems caused by spouse job location" and "problems with obtaining part-time employment." These were drawn from major problems of National Merit Scholarship winners (Watley, 1971). A Likert type response scale was set up for each of the problems, varying from 1 (a severe problem) to 5 (not a problem).

Measures of Family Relationships

This study utilized 3 indicators of family relationships determined to be greater problems for the females than the males. Family problems have

been most frequently measured by the use of a marital adjustment scale. Most have measured adjustment of wives (Gover, 1963; Orden and Bradburn, 1969) or husbands (Axelson, 1963; Nye, 1971). Problems with children, and husband-wife conflicts, marital satisfaction, cohesion, and companionship have also been used as measures of family relationships.

Early studies of marital success frequently conceptualized it as marital adjustments. More recent researchers felt that less ambiguous terms such as happiness, conflict, and satisfaction were better conceptualizations of various dimensions of marital success. Blood (1963) and Orden and Bradburn (1969) suggested that spending leisure time activities together was one dimension of marital success.

Indicators of family relationships for this study were "problems in obtaining household help," "problems in performing traditional female domestic tasks adequately," and "lack of cohesion between husband and wife." These were evaluated using Likert type scales. Household help problems were evaluated using response categories previously described for major problems. Cohesion was measured in terms of the amount of leisure time husband and wife had spent together.

Adequacy of performance of traditional female domestic tasks. To measure how necessary replacement of female household services might be, a question was included on the adequacy of performance of traditional female domestic tasks. This question asked, "On the whole, how adequately are the above tasks being performed?" The tasks included seven items; housework, child care, cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing, and health care during illness of children.

Personal Adjustment of the Worker

Three indicators of personal adjustment were included to measure the emotional state of the worker.

Measurement of powerlessness. This study utilizes the concept of power as the individual's self-rated ability to achieve occupational and general goals. The indicators were drawn from work by Dean (1959), Seeman (1959) and Neal and Rettig (1967) on powerlessness. A factor was developed through factor analysis to indicate specific powerlessness. It focused on the instrumentality of the actor in accomplishing career success and personal goals.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree to the statements that "There is little or nothing I can do to succeed in my career", and "No matter how hard I try, I will be unable to obtain my goals."

Adjustment of the worker in meeting career and family goals was defined in terms of both "personal role problems" and "system sex role problems." A factor analysis technique was utilized to extract these two factors from the list of major problems discussed earlier in terms of family and career problems.

Measurement of personal role problems. Personal role problems were defined as those problems encountered in carrying out a particular role set. The factor included the items of "frustration from being pulled in several directions," "personal conflict over work-family roles," and "insufficient time." This factor indicates personal adjustment of the worker to various role demands.

Measurement of system sex role problems. To measure the compatibility of the worker and the demands due to sex status, two indicators were included in this factor; "unfair competition with opposite sex," and "discrimination because of sex."

## Results

The scope of those role problems which were experienced to a greater extent by women than by men was much less than expected. About 30% of all role problems were found to be experienced to a greater degree by career women than career men.

Overall, the findings lend support to hypotheses 1 and 4. That is, the household work variable was the only independent variable to be linked as intermediating in the greater role problems experienced by women than by men. The areas where the participation in household work was an intermediate link between female sex and greater role problems were: spouse job location as a problem for own career, traditional female domestic task inadequacy, and personal role problems (For results, see Table 1, p. 27). Greater problems in each area is one consequence of spending more time on household work. That is, regardless of how much sharing of housework occurs, the hours of participation in household work are directly linked with greater career and family problems.

Spouse Job Location (Figure 2)

In this case, average weekly time spent on housework does decompose part of the original sex difference in greater spouse job location problems for females than for males. It should be mentioned that background variables of higher spouse income and working spouse also decompose part of the sex difference in this problem.

However, we find that female sex status is related to greater participation in the homemaker and parent role, which in turn has a direct link with greater spouse job location problems. The two important background variables considered in the decomposition of sex differences in this role problem are higher spouse income and a working spouse, both of which are related to female sex status and also both of which are direct causes of greater spouse job location problems for respondents (which create problems in their own marriage and career plans). Both background factors relating to dual career families, and those who do more housework (homemaker and parent role) decompose the original sex difference in this situation. Negative societal influences on career goals also directly cause a greater problem. (The direction is as expected.)

Traditional Female Domestic Task Inadequacy (Figure 3)

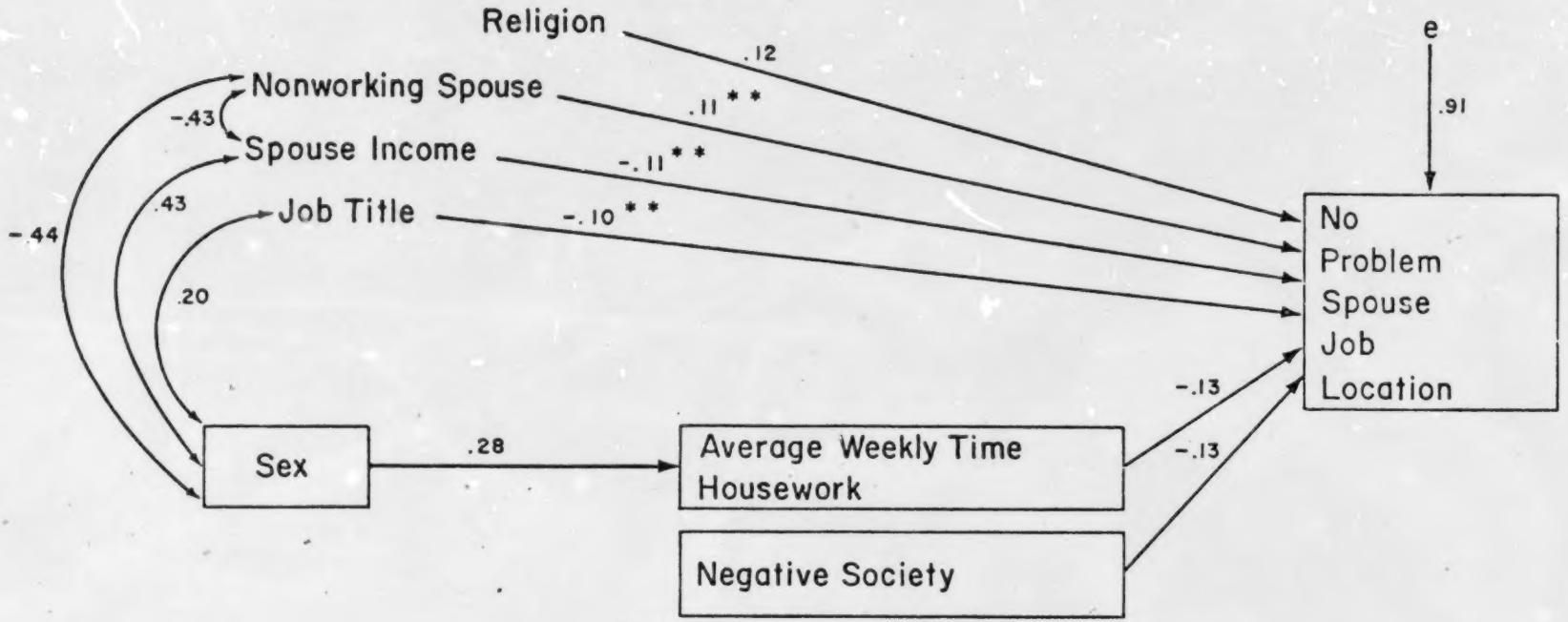
In the case of female domestic task inadequacy, the decomposition of sex differences operates largely through the larger share in performance of traditional female domestic tasks by women, which in turn is directly related to greater inadequacy in such tasks.

The data point to the excessive burden placed upon the career women in meeting their expectations in traditional female task performance. The traditional division of labor in household roles is maintained at the expense of these tasks being performed adequately. Many such tasks may be left undone (Pleck, 1975).

Background variables of the working spouse and higher spouse income accounted for some of the original relationship between female sex and greater share of traditional female domestic tasks, but a very strong direct effect of sex on the share of traditional female domestic tasks remained (beta weight = .60).

Other direct effects on traditional female domestic task inadequacy did not differ for men and women respondents after background variables were entered into the regression equations. The personal attitude of a lower rank of "success

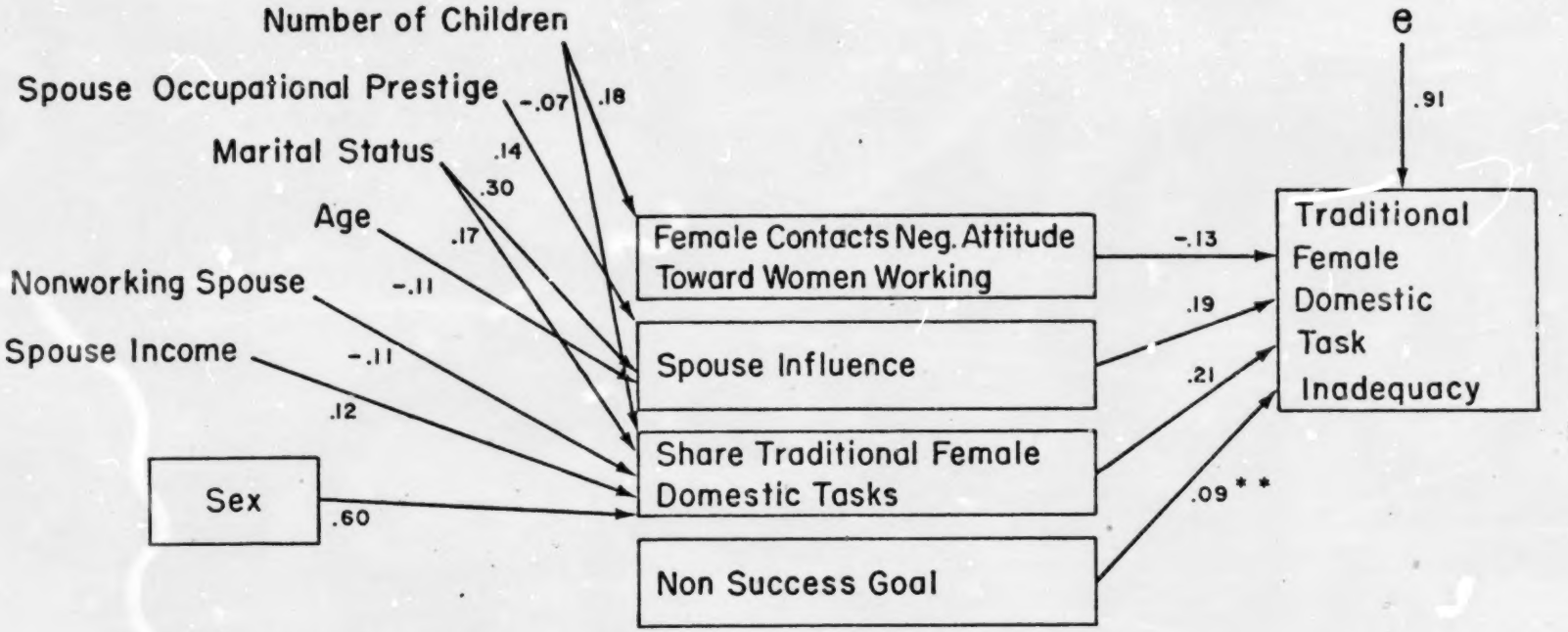
Figure 2. Path Model of No Problems Spouse Job Location for Selected Independent Variables and Controls




$R^2$ = 18

**.10 level of significance

Figure 3. Path Model of Traditional Female Domestic Task Inadequacy for Selected Independent Variables and Controls




Zero-Order Relationships Among Exogenous Variables

| | | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Sex | -.17 | .15 | .24 | .09 | -.44 | .43 |
| 2. | Number of Children | | NS | -.09 | .15 | .21 | -.11 |
| 3. | Spouse Occ. Prestige | | | NS | -.11 | NS | -.39 |
| 4. | Marital Status | | | | NS | -.16 | NS |
| 5. | Age | | | | | NS | NS |
| 6. | Nonworking Spouse | | | | | | -.43 |
| 7. | Spouse Income | | | | | | |

$R^2$ = .17

**.10 level of significance

-17-

as a career goal," a more negative "influence of the spouse on career goals," and a more positive "attitude of female social contacts toward women working" were direct causes of greater female domestic task inadequacy.

While we would expect that negative attitudes of female contacts toward women's employment would increase female role problems, positive attitudes of female contacts tend to increase those problems in the area of adequacy of performance of traditional female domestic work. Positive attitudes of female contacts may cause a shift toward lower quality of performance of traditional female household work, in order to keep up with demands of the employment.

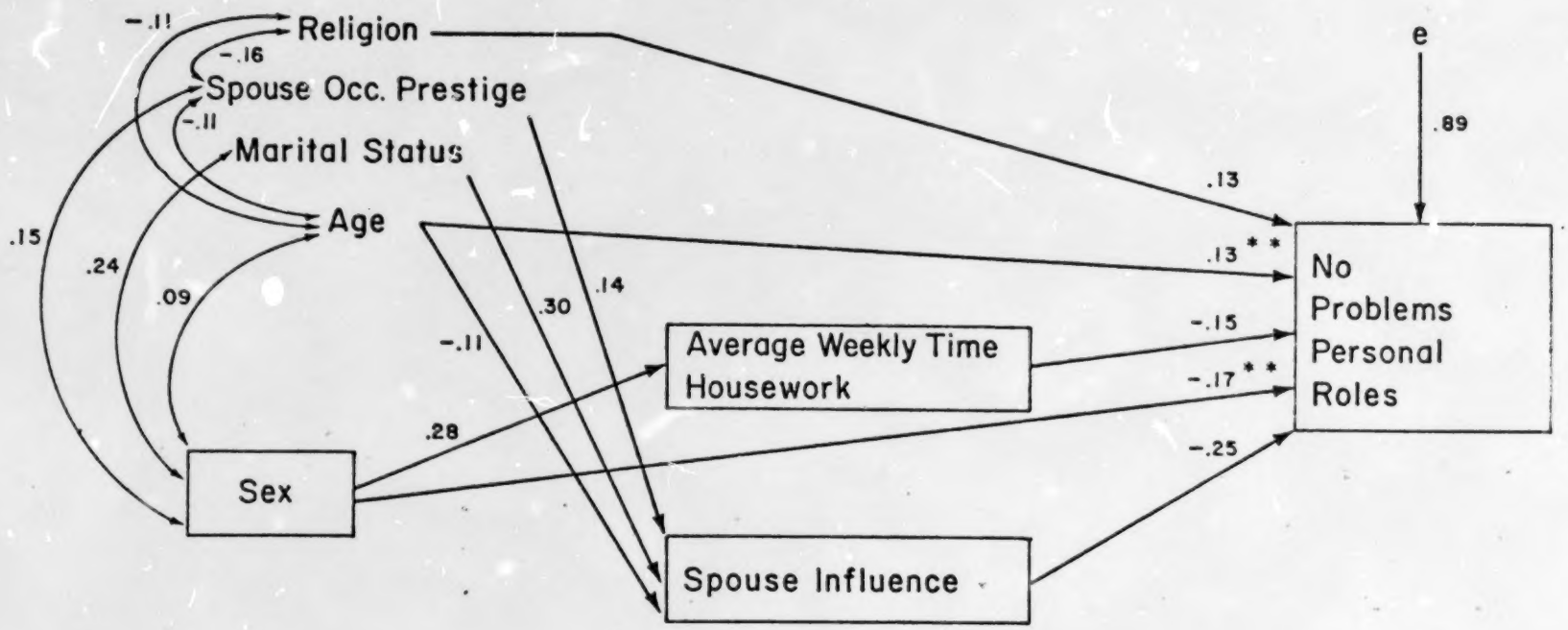
Personal Role Problems (Figure 4)

This is a greater problem for females which is linked to spending more time in weekly housework. Once again spending more time on housework per week regardless of how much work is done by the spouse is linked with greater personal role problems. Perhaps, by trying to conform to norms of both household tasks and career expectations, the only area which can be neglected is the personal role area. Thus those who attempt to do two complete jobs in domestic work and the labor force tend to end up with greater personal role problems. A negative spouse was directly linked to having greater personal role problems. There was still a nonsignificant and weak relationship between female sex and greater problems in personal roles after the statistically relevant controls and independent variables were entered into the regressions. Career women still may have slightly greater personal role problems than career men even after adjusting for sex differences in participation in weekly housework and after entering the other statistically relevant variables.

There were three possible consequences for the persons who contribute more household work; 1) greater spouse job location problems, 2) greater traditional female domestic task inadequacy, 3) and/or greater personal role problems. The hypothesis did not hold for household help problems, for lack of cohesion, personal power, or for system sex role problems. (To be discussed later).

In sum, for eight variables identified as more problematic for the women than the men, three were indirectly linked through household work variables, such that relevant controls and household work variables reduced the link between female sex status and the role problem below the level of statistical significance. In three other areas relevant controls were found to reduce the original sex difference below the level of statistical significance.

Figure 4. Path Model of No Problems Personal Roles for Selected Independent Variables and Controls




$R^2$ = .21

**.10 level of significance

## Conclusions

The hypothesis that the household work would be the most important independent variable in interpreting the relationship between female sex status and greater role problems held. In one out of two of these career problems, female sex status was directly linked to the greater participation in household work, which was itself directly linked to greater role problems. Thus, the sex difference in "problems caused by spouse job location" was largely interpreted by greater participation by women in household work. Background variables of higher spouse income, nonworking spouse, and job status also operated to weaken the original relationship between female sex status and the role problem. The link between female sex status and "greater personal adjustment problems" was found to operate through the greater participation in household work; "traditional female household task inadequacy" supported the household work hypothesis among the three family relationship variables.

It appears that background variables of "not being currently married" and "having a lower-status job" explained the sex difference in greater "part-time employment problems" for women than men. Not being currently married was the important background variable explaining the sex difference in lower "marital cohesion" for females than males. Lower income was the important background variable in explaining the sex difference in feelings of greater "personal powerlessness" for females compared with males.

Thus, we found three role problems in which the sex differences were decomposed through the greater participation in household work by females, controlling for all other statistically relevant variables. We found four role problems where background variables explained the original sex differences. In the case of the eighth role problem, general system sex role problems, the difference between males and females actually widened after the introduction of the background variables, suggesting some of these variables had been suppressing the strength of the original relationship between sex and system sex role problems. This role problem appears attributable entirely to sex and may indicate sex discrimination.[6] However, measurement error in the independent, dependent, and control variables might offer an alternative explanation. Also, multiplicative effects of variables could possibly explain the relationship.

The major findings of this research can be summarized in a set of generalizations.

1. Of the three factors considered as independent variables, household work is the important component in decomposing the original sex differences. The personal attitudes, the household work, attitudes toward the individual's employment and controls were all unimportant in accounting for the sex differences in system sex role problems. Indications are that sex discrimination may account for the sex differences in this role problem.

2. Control variables of low income, not being currently married, lower job status, and high spouse income decomposed the sex differences in greater role problems of career women compared with men in four areas. The original sex differences were reduced in each case by introduction of control variables statistically related to both sex and the dependent variable.

3. More generally, sex differences in role problems appeared less frequently than was indicated by the literature. It would appear, therefore, that selection of personnel matched by occupational category does reduce the number of sex differences in role problems. It is hoped that further studies will be undertaken using the male comparison group technique and the use of comparable occupations.

One implication is that it is possible to study samples of males and females together when adequate matching and controls are used. Previous single sex studies have often resulted in lack of comparable questions. Particularly in the case of both traditional male-only studies in work and in the case of traditional female-only studies in the family, it would appear that comparable samples by sex may provide a basis for a combined analysis technique.

4. Spouse job location problems supported the hypothesis that greater participation in household work decomposed the original sex difference, controlling for all relevant variables.

5. Greater participation in household work also decomposed the sex differences in personal role problems, controlling for all relevant variables.

6. Greater participation in the household work also reduced the sex differences in household task inadequacy problems of career women, controlling for all relevant variables. Sex differences in both greater household help problems for women than men and the lower husband-wife cohesion for women than men were decomposed through controls. The important control variables were high spouse income and not being currently married.

7. The sex difference in the role problem of feelings of greater personal powerlessness for females than males was reduced by the background variable of lower income.

8. Out of eight original sex differences in role problems of career women, four were decomposed through background variables. These were part-time employment problems, household help problems, cohesion, and feelings of personal powerlessness. For system sex role problems, neither independent variables nor controls decomposed the original sex differences, leading to the implication that sex discrimination might be a basis of the relationship.

Three of the four remaining role problems supported the hypothesis as to the direction and importance of the participation in household work in decomposing sex differences in the greater role problems for career women than men, controlling for all other relevant variables.

9. Overall, from the above conclusions it follows that most sex differences in role problems experience to a greater extent by career women than by career men were explained by background variables or were linked to the female sex through women's greater participation in household work, which in turn acts to increase the role problems.

One conclusion from this study is that subsequent research on sex differences should (1) focus on time spent in both family and employment activities, (2) select males and females matched by occupational status before looking at sex differences, (3) attempt to use the comparison group method of analyzing sex differences, (4) explore general path models in decomposition of sex differences, and (5) attempt to reduce the number of variables in developing a model of best fit with the data.

Subsequent studies might investigate questions regarding (1) what the specific interrelationships among the independent variables are, (2) what time series data tell us about the decomposition of sex differences, (3) how family, career problems, and personal adjustment problems interact with one another; (4) what other possible interaction effects there are from measured and unmeasured variables; (5) what variables decompose the sex differences in those role problems which are greater for males than for females; (6) how nonworking males compare with nonworking females in their experience of role problems; and (7) what analytical models explain couple satisfactions.

## Implications

In this analysis we have weighed the consequences of employment in terms of the link between female sex status and greater role problems for women compared with men, and the relative importance of factors which could decompose the sex differences in work, family, and personal adjustment role problems. Career women could face greater problems in carrying out these roles effectively for several reasons. One reason is that one or both of these roles may be overdemanding and result in role strain (Goode, 1960; Turner, 1970). There are limits to the possible combination of roles (Epstein, 1970). The presence of children, prior training, and spouse attitude toward working all affect the probability of becoming a career woman. Household work has not kept women from holding jobs; however, it has largely kept them from taking on the more demanding positions. Many women do combine marriage and work roles, but at the sacrifice of the development of their full abilities.

Our study shows that the family system of roles is not well integrated with the work system. The present set of roles women perform in the family effectively bars most of them from high status jobs and reinforces the cultural norm that defines low ranking service and white collar jobs as appropriate for them (Epstein, 1970). These role demands impose extra burdens in terms of the amount of time spent on household tasks. The household work areas are also divided along sex lines and this sex-linked division of labor can also lead to role problems. More weekly hours and more traditional female family tasks are examples of the greater role obligations placed on women in household work.

Household work places an excessive strain on career and personal adjustment as well as family relationships for career women compared with career men. The clustering of roles for women of sex role, homemaker and parent role, and career role is an interrelated set. The dysfunctional role demands for women in the family create strains which impact all the other roles in the set. Both family roles and work roles create strains for each other (as indicated by the direct relationship between greater participation in household work and greater career problems, and the direct relationship between greater work hours and greater family problems). Household work impacts aspects of family, work and personal roles. Household work obligations place a greater strain on the family when the woman attempts demanding work outside the home yet maintains high regard for

family roles than they do for the man. An example of these role problems can be seen in terms of traditional female domestic task performance. The women express their dissatisfaction with the way these tasks are performed to a greater degree than the men, and yet they continue to be largely responsible for performing these tasks.

The resulting lack of adequacy in household task performance is not surprising when one considers the total role demands the women experience. In addition to their administrative positions, household tasks such as cleaning, cooking, washing, shopping, and child care are expected. As a way of reducing total role obligations, our study suggests many women may not work when young children are present, or they let household tasks slide. There is too little time to accomplish these combined roles well, thus the expression of task performance inadequacy.

Problems in finding household help are also greater for career women than for men. We might expect that women with greater household work demands (such as the presence of young children) would have greater problems finding household help. However, the amount of time spent on housework, the division of traditional female household tasks, and the number and ages of children are not related to difficulty in finding household help. Greater spouse income increases the likelihood of such problems, while variations in role demands do not.

Blood (1963: 302) suggests unneeded employment may lead to greater marital problems. Another explanation would be to consider Holstrom's (1972) findings that the dual career couple experiences considerable time demands. In our study, a high spouse income often implies a dual career family relationship since the sample consists of career men and women. Our findings are that the higher the spouse income, the <u>greater</u> the problems of finding household help. One implication of these findings is that the most severe problems of finding household help occur in the dual career family. Dual career couples have little time for household tasks. Since neither can take over a larger share of the domestic work, their only option is to seek outside help. The overtaxing role demands of work and family are particularly problematic for these families. Lack of time rather than "unneeded" income may be the key to the negative marital impact.

The economic costs of discouraging women from careers and the costs of discouraging dual career families through lack of alternative services must be recognized. Our study found that among the independent variables, it is not that the women hold particular attitudes (i.e., lower success goals) which impede their handling of career, family, and personal adjustment problems, but rather that there are greater demands placed upon them (in household work) which make conforming to the career and traditional family roles more problematic for them than for the men.

## FOOTNOTES

*The author thanks the Institute for Sociological Research at the University of Washington for assistance in this research. Thanks goes also to the Department of Social and Health Services for permission to conduct the survey. Dr. Christine Bose and Dr. Herbert Costner were helpful in providing advice and a critique of the methodology.

[1]Census data, New York Times, 3/1977.

[2]Turner, 1970, p. 292.

[3]Ibid., p. 292.

[4]Rossi, p. 101.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Duncan (1967) has noted, "Discrimination consists, I suppose in a demonstration of inequality on one measure, after the contributiors have been evaluated." Evidence of discrimination in system sex roles may be seen by the presistence of sex differences after all other variables have been controlled.

Also, Althauser and Wigler (1972) discuss the applicability of regression analysis to measuring discrimination, indicating that a difference between two groups in some outcome is the result of three factors: differences in mean background or independent variables, differences in the degree to which background or independent variables affect dependent variables (differences in slopes), and differences which are not explained by the above and which might be attributable to discrimination.

Table 1. Multiple Regression Tests of the Analytical Model for Household Work

| Dependent Variables and Sex / Independent Variables | Beta Weight | F | Sig. | Simple r |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Weekly Hours Housework by Respondent** | | | | |
| No Spouse Job Location Problems (1-5, 5 no prob.) | -.13 | 4.02 | .05 | -.24 |
| Household Task Inadequacy (1-5, 5 lo. adeq.) | .04 | .36 | .55 | .13 |
| No Problems Personal Roles (-.69 to 1.96, 1.96 no prob.) | -.15 | 5.49 | .02 | -.25 |
| Sex (0-1, 1 = female) | .28 | 19.91 | .00 | .31 |
| **Daily Household Hours** | | | | |
| No Spouse Job Location Problems | -.04 | .40 | .53 | -.24 |
| No Problems Household Help (1-5, 5 no prob.) | -.08 | 1.44 | .23 | -.15 |
| Household Task Inadequacy | -.04 | .31 | .58 | .16 |
| No Problems Personal Roles | -.08 | 1.29 | .26 | -.18 |
| No Problems System Sex Roles (-2.97 to .53, .53 no prob.) | .06 | 1.06 | .30 | -.13 |
| Sex | .20 | 7.61 | .01 | .40 |
| **Percent Female Household Tasks by Respondent** | | | | |
| No Part-time Employment Problems (1-5, 5 no prob.) | -.09 | .89 | .35 | -.14 |
| Lack of Cohesion (1-4, 4 lo cohesion) | .11 | 1.45 | .23 | .18 |
| Household Task Inadequacy | .21 | 4.69 | .03 | .33 |
| No Problems Personal Roles | .15 | 2.28 | .13 | -.16 |
| No Problems System Sex Roles | -.06 | .44 | .51 | -.39 |
| Sex | .60 | 174.88 | .00 | .79 |
| **Daily Work Hours** | | | | |
| Lack of Cohesion | .12 | 5.34 | .02 | .14 |
| Personal Power (-2.26 to .65, .65 hi power) | .04 | .44 | .51 | .10 |
| Sex | .03 | .16 | .68 | -.13 |
| **Daily Family Hours** | | | | |
| Lack of Cohesion | -.02 | .14 | .70 | -.12 |
| Household Task Inadequacy | -.06 | 1.11 | .29 | -.14 |
| Personal Power | .12 | 4.02 | .05 | .19 |
| Sex | -.02 | .13 | .72 | -.15 |

## REFERENCES

Althauser and Wigler
1972 "Standardization and component analysis." Sociological Methods and Research 1(Aug.):97-135.

Astin, Helen S.
1969 The Woman Doctorate in America. Hartford: Connecticut Printers, Inc.

Axelson, L.
1963 "The marital adjustment and marital role definitions of husbands of working and nonworking wives." Marriage and Family Living (May):189-195.

Bailyn, Lotte
1971 "Career and family orientations of husbands and wives in relation to marital happiness." Pp. 545-567 Athena Theodore (ed.), The Professional Woman. Cambridge: Schenkman.

Bernard, Jessie
1964 Academic Women. University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Blood, Robert O.
1963 "The husband-wife relationship." Pp. 282-305 Nye and Hoffman (eds.), The Employed Mother in America. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Blood, Robert O. and Donald M. Wolfe
1960 Husbands and Wives, the Dynamics of Married Living. New York: MacMillan Company.

Caplow, Theodore and Reece J. McGee
1965 The Academic Marketplace. New York: Anchor Books, Inc.

Dean, Dwight
1961 "Alienation: its meaning and measurement." American Sociological Review 26:753-758.

Duncan, Otis Dudley
1967 "Discrimination against Negroes." Anals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 371 (May):85-103.

Epstein, Cynthia
1970 Woman's Place, Options and Limits in Professional Careers. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Epstein, Cynthia
1971 "Women lawyers and their profession: inconsistency of social controls and their consequences for professional performance." Pp. 669-684 Athena Theodore (ed.), The Professional Woman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman.

Feldman, Saul
1973 Escape from the Doll's House. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington.

Fogarty, Michael P., Rhona Rapoport and Robert Rapoport
1971 Sex, Career and Family. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Gauger, William
1973 "Household work: can we add it to GNP." Family Economics Review, Consumer and Food Economics Institute Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture 7 (Oct.):12-15.

Goode, William J.
1960 "A theory of role strain." American Sociological Review 25 (Aug.) 483-496.

Gover, D. O.
1963 "Socio-economic differential in the relationship between marital adjustment and wife's employment status." Marriage and Family Living 25 (Nov.):452-458.

Harmon, Lindsey
1968 "Careers of Ph.D.s: academic vs. non-academic." National Academy of Sciences--Office of Scientific Personnel. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Hoffman, Lois Waldis
1975 "Psychological factors." Pp. 32-62 Hoffman and Nye (eds.), Working Mothers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Holstrom, L. L.
1972 The Two Career Family. Cambridge: Schenkman.

Merton, Robert K.
1938 "Social structure and anomie." American Sociological Review 3:672-682.

Miller, Jon, Sanford Labowitz and Lincoln Fry
1975 "Inequities in the organizational experiences of women and men." Social Forces 54(2):365-381.

Mitchell, Juliet
1966 "Women: the longest revolution." New Left Review 40 (Dec.):11-37.

Myrdal, Alva and Viola Klein
1956 Women's Two Roles: Home and Work. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Neal, Arthur G. and Rettig
1967 "On the multidimensionality of alienation." American Sociological Review 32 (Feb.):54-64.

Nye, F. Ivan
1975 "Effects on mother." Pp. 208-210 Lois W. Hoffman and F. Ivan Nye (eds.), Working Mothers. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Nye, F. Ivan and Lois W. Hoffman, eds.
1963 The Employed Mother in America. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Orden, S.R. and N.M. Bradburn
1969 "Working wives and marital happiness." American Journal of Sociology 74 (Jan.):392-407.

Paloma, Margaret and T. Neal Garland
1971 "The married professional woman, a study of tolerance and domestication." Journal of Marriage and Family 33 (Aug.):531-540.

Perrucci, Carolyn
1970 "Minority status and pursuit of professional careers: women in science and engineering." Social Forces 49(2):245-257.

Pleck, Joseph
1975 "Work and family roles: from sex-patterned segregation to integration." Paper read at annual meeting of American Sociological Association in San Francisco.

Pyun, Choong Soo
1972 "The monetary value of a housewife." Pp. 187-193 Malbin and Waehrer (eds.) Woman in a Man-Made World. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Ridley, Carl
1973 "Exploring the impact of work satisfaction and involvement on marital interaction when both partners are employed." Journal of Marriage and Family 35 (May):229-237.

Seeman, Melvin
1959 "On the meaning of alienation." American Sociological Review 24 (Dec.):783-791.

Simon, Rita Clark and Galway
1967 "The woman Ph.D." Social Problems 15 (Fall):221-236.

Turner, Ralph
1964 "Some aspects of women's ambition." American Journal of Sociology 70(3):271-285.

Turner, Ralph
1970 Family Interaction. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Walker, Kathryn
1973 "Household work time: its implication for family." Family Economics Review. Consumer and Food Economics Institute Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture 7 (Oct.):7-11.

Watley, Donovan J.
1971 "Career or marriage?: A longitudinal study of able young women." Pp. 260-274 Athena Theodore (ed.), The Professional Woman. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Schenkman.

White, Rodney F.
1971 "Female identity and career choice: the nursing case." Pp. 275-289 Athena Theodore (ed.), The Professional Woman. Cambridge: Schenkman.

Wilensky, Harold L.
1961 "Orderly careers and social participation: the impact of work history on social integration in the middle mass." American Sociological Review 26 (Aug.):525.